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An

Inaugural Dissertation

On

Phlegmatia Dolens.
By

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Phlegmatia Dolens

This disease, more usually denominated swelled leg or milk leg, is almost exclusively confined to puerperal women. Examples of it however have occurred where that state did not exist, and I am informed by my preceptor Dr. Charles Warton, that he met with a case in a male subject.

It generally makes its appearance about a fortnight after delivery; sometimes sooner, sometimes later. The swelling is preceded by tenderness and transient pains in the pelvis, increas-

ceded by pressure; and occasionally pain and difficulty in making water. The patient's spirits are often depressed without any evident cause, and from this, and a sense of great weakness, the approach of the disease has been foretold. They are next seized often very suddenly with acute pain and stiffness in some part of the lower extremity, as the groin or calf of the leg, extending to the heel.

Within about twenty four hours after the pain is felt, the limb swells and becomes tense: it is hot though not red, pale and shining. The swelling sometimes proceeds from the groin downwards; in other cases it is first perceptible about the calf of the leg, and proceeds upwards. The

one of the most important and interesting subjects of the day
and it is one which has attracted the attention of the
public mind in a way which is unprecedented in the history
of the world. It is a subject which has been discussed
in every language and in every country and it is one
which has been the subject of many a heated controversy.
It is a subject which has been the subject of many a
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inguinal glands are also swelled, indurated, and painful.

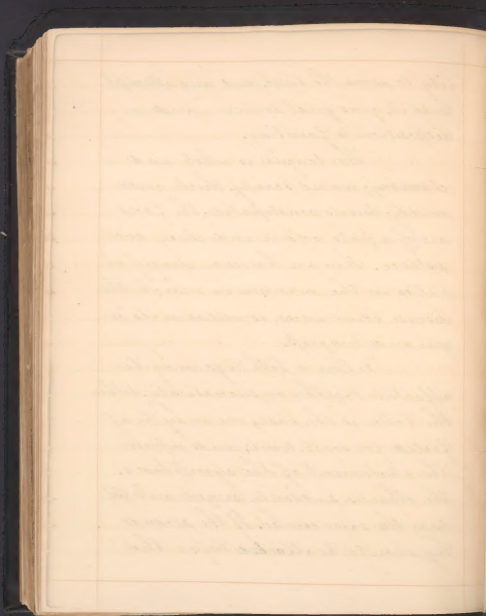
The first effects of this disease are, said, very much to resemble those which attend the absorption of some poisonous matter from the lower part of the limb. The whole surface of the swelling becomes insufferably tender to the slightest touch or pressure, especially over those parts in which the glands are located. There is a deadly paleness of the whole body. The appearance of the affected limb or limbs differs, however, from that of dropsical or other swellings.

The pain is generally diminished in proportion to the increase of the swelling, but from the very commencement, the patient loses the abil-

city to move the limb, and any attempt to do it, gives great torture and a disposition to fainting.

The tongue is white and clammy; urine scanty, thick, and muddy; bowels constipated; the faces are of a pale colour and clay consistence. There are however many varieties in the manner in which the disease commences, as well as in its degree and progress.

Either or both legs may be affected together or successively. When the latter is the case, one may be affected for some time, and upon the abatement of the symptoms, the other is suddenly seized and follows the same course. If the second leg should be attacked before the



first recovers, the progress of the disease in the first, is not affected by that in the last. When only one leg is affected, there are sometimes exacerbations after a apparently considerable amendment.

The period at which the swelling reaches the acme, is various, but it is generally accomplished in twenty four or forty eight hours. It does not often increase the limb beyond double the usual size. In the course generally of ten days, sometimes even in two or three, the febrile symptoms, swelling &c. abate; it is sometimes however, longer before this takes place, and then do not entirely disappear for some time.

After all the more urgent



symptoms have ceased, the patient is
left feeble, and the limbs stiff, and
often for a long time lambs. In
the course of the cure, we often find
hard lumps in different parts of the
limb, especially in its back or in
side. These are considered by some
as indurated Lymph, by others mus-
cular contractions. It differs from
anasarca in this, that no serum, or at
least very little is effused when the
swelling is punctured, and in its
not being increased when in a depen-
ding posture.

Dr. Burns affirms that this
disease sometimes commences like
rheumatism, with pain in the back
and hip joint. And it is even thought
by some very intelligent practitioners ✓



to be a variety of that disease, and
is treated accordingly.

This is not generally a fatal
disease, but is very tedious and ex-
ceedingly painful. Death however may
take place from suppuration, gangrene,
or exhaustion, proceeding from the vio-
lence of the constitutional disease. Any
violent exertion of the patient has
also proved suddenly fatal.

If the causes of this disease
little is known. It appears after ex-
cess as well as difficult labours; nor
does it seem to depend on any pec-
uliarity of constitution, as it hap-
pens equally in the corpulent and
the thin, the strong and the weak;
those who give suck, and those who



it not; neither does it seem to depend
on the mode of treatment during
labour. And what is still more re-
markable, it sometimes appears in-
dependent of the puerperal state. I
saw a case which occurred in a wo-
man who had not borne a child
for eight years.

Pathology.

Of the nature of this disease, we
have hitherto been as ignorant as
of its causes. The most probable of
the antiquated notions is, that it
consists in inflammation of the
absorbents. I am informed that
Dr. Dever (in his new work on the
diseases of women) has located it
in the cellular tissue of the os uteri.



ity. I have not had an opportunity
of seeing the essays of that 'gentl
leman in support of his theory; but
am induced to believe from the ex
cellent judgements of the Dr. that he
is correct.

Treatment.

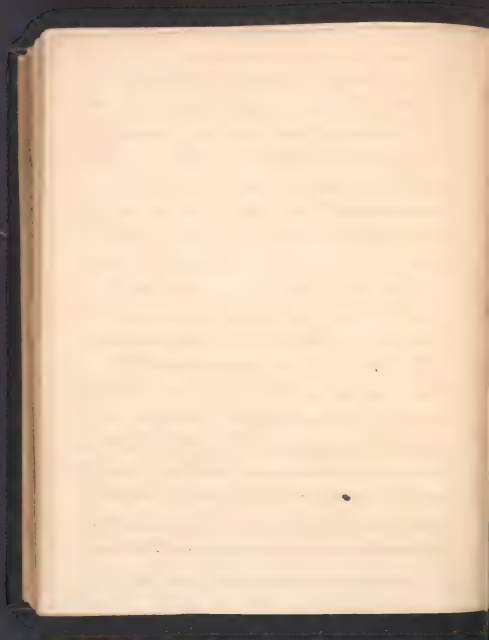
My attention was first direct
ed to this disease in particular, from
having witnessed the inefficiency of
the common mode of practice, when
applied to a case, which fell un-
der my observation. And although
I have nothing to offer quite origi-
nal, I shall at least corroborate the
superior efficacy of a plan of treat-
ment, pointed out in a note on Burns
work, by Dr. Chapman; so far at
least as its successful applications



is one case, more deserves attention.

I shall first detail the common mode of practice, which in my opinion amounts to little more than doing nothing. The treatment naturally divides itself into that which is applicable to the limb, and that which is proper for the constitution.

The first object is to arrest the disease whilst it is confined to the joints. For this purpose leeches and blisters are recommended. These the leeches are to be opened; but we are particularly cautioned against purging. After the blisters have done, we are farther directed to envelope the limb in cloths wet with a tepid solution of acetos plumbis or warm vinegar. Dr. John



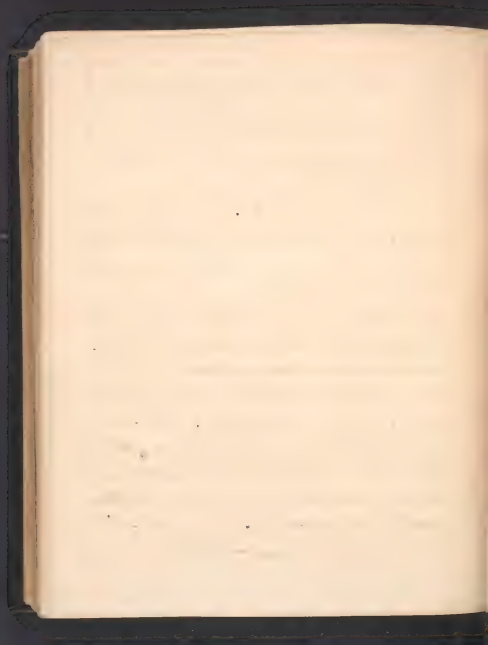
Charke recommends a poultice of
bran, olive oil and scorp. lees, to be ap-
plied to the whole Limb. Dr. Caines
speaks highly of Gualmel soaked
in hot vinegar and applied to
the Leg. To these may be added gen-
tle friction with some anodyne
ointment.

Next, of what is to be done
for the constitution. Dr. Denman
recommends, from the commence-
ment, the liberal use of wine, as
the sense of extreme weakness and
excessive irritability are the most
distressing ^{symptoms}. Some allowance ought
perhaps to be made, for this appa-
rently strange practice, as the Dr. per-
haps only met with it in crowded
places. It is certainly inapplicable in



this Country. Such medicines are also recommended which have a determination to the skin. This is about the amount of what has been heretofore recommended.

I shall now proceed to give the views which I entertain of the treatment of this disease. I was induced to adopt this mode of practice, from having seen how little ~~the~~ relief ^{was} afforded by the usual mode of practice. These considerations induced me to change my mode of practice, and the inflammatory symptoms which attend this disease, together with Dr. Chapman's note above alluded to, determined me to adopt the plan about to be described, and which proved speedily successful in a



case which occurred to me last sum-
mer.

I shall first speak of the
remedies adapted to the constitu-
tion. That this is an inflamma-
tory disease, no one can doubt who
shall observe the attendant symp-
toms. This being granted, resection
the most effectual remedy in all
inflammatory diseases, should never
be neglected in this. The extent to
which this remedy should be car-
ried, must be determined by the
pulse.

The next in importance ~~is~~
is purging. Notwithstanding Mr.
Bain's caution to the contrary, it
will be found, according to my
limited experience a very impor-



-tant remedy.

Opium at night, after the more inflammatory symptoms have been reduced by the preceding measures, will be found indispensable to procure sleep and calm the irritability of the system. I have found the Dover powder to answer extremely well.

Now, of the remedies proper for the limb. We shall find that the application of twenty or thirty leeches to the groin will aid much in arresting the progress of the disease.

Blisters were used in the first case I witnessed, but with no advantage.

Some of the anodyne linaments for the purpose of keeping the limb in a moist condition, may be rubbed on with advantage.

This concludes what I have to say
of the treatment of this disease. Sim-
ple as it may appear, I believe, with
much confidence, that, if it were
generally pursued, it would very
much curtail the sufferings of
humanity, and the disease would
soon cease to be the terror of puer-
peral women.

